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ART. VII. — *Résumé de l'Histoire des Pays-Bas* par FRÉDÉRIC, BARON DE REIFFENBERG. 2 tom. Bruxelles. 1827.

THE people of the United States are descended from various European families, among which, although the inhabitants of the British Islands be the predominant one, so as to have stamped their own impress on the institutions and language of the whole, yet other races, and especially the German and Dutch, are entitled to great consideration for their numbers, and respect for their individual character. We frequently have occasion to observe, that Americans are prone to look back too exclusively to their English ancestry, and to dwell on the history and antiquities of England, forgetful of the fact that we possess high and glorious recollections associated with others among the best of the nations of Europe. Should we not be proud to reckon, as progenitors of our people, the greatest and wisest of the Republics of modern Europe, equally as the greatest and wisest of the Monarchies of modern Europe? Holland, as well as England? to explore the old history, to revisit the land of each, in pious veneration of our forefathers, all honored and deserving honor, whether they came from Britain, or from the kindred shores of the Netherlands?

For ourselves, we profess that, English as we are in origin, and proud as we are of our fellowship of blood with the great and free minds of Britain, we have yet trod the soil of the Netherlands, and looked on the monuments of her days of liberty and prosperity, and studied the history of her great men, with a sense of exultation that their blood also is infused into the veins, and with it, as we trust, their better traits are perpetuated in the character of the people of the United States.

In the strength of such feelings, we laid before our readers, some short time since, an idea of the fortunes and vicissitudes of the once free cities of Flanders;* and we proceed now to give a brief account of the ancient history of the Netherlands.

Men are accustomed to think and speak of the Netherlands, as they do of Italy and Germany, in the aggregate, and as one country; but the regions, which we commonly designate by that appellation, have been united together under a single gov-

* See the North American Review, Vol. XXXIX. pp. 112 et seq.

ernment only occasionally, and with protracted intervals of complete separation. During one long period we find them ruled by independent counts, dukes, marquesses, or bishops, who warred one upon another at will, and were each a petty sovereign within his respective narrow dominions. At a later period we see them grouped in two large divisions, the first acting the subordinate part of a dependency of Spain or Austria, and the second constituting a powerful Republic, and as such, gathering riches and fame in every quarter of the globe. And yet the geographical position of the territory distinguished as the Netherlands, and the national peculiarities of most of its inhabitants, fully justify the popular application of the name.

Enclosed between France on the south, and the Rhenish provinces of Prussia and other states of Germany on the east, is a low plain, which, as it approaches the North Sea, gradually sinks down to the very level of the ocean, from whose ravages it is protected by the laborious industry of man. This territory is traversed by the broad channels of the Rhine, the Maes, and the Scheldt, and cut up into islands or peninsulas, by the confluence of its rivers, or interjected arms of the sea, so that it possesses a humid atmosphere and a wet soil, but partially reclaimed from the water, and thus well receives the name of the Low Countries, or Netherlands. Its population, however, consists of two distinct races. Those of its inhabitants, who dwell in the south-eastern extremity of the plain, where it blends with the higher grounds of the neighbouring nations, forming about one third part of the whole population, are called Walloons, and are evidently of Gallic stock, and speak a dialect of the French. The residue of the inhabitants, residing near or contiguous to the seacoast, are quite as clearly of Saxon race, and speak the Low German, in its different forms of Dutch and Flemish, being subdivided into the Flemings and the Dutch or Hollanders. The Walloons and Flemings inhabit the provinces familiarly known in modern history as the Austrian Netherlands, composing the present kingdom of the Belgians; while the Dutch, in whom the national peculiarities are most completely developed, constitute the kingdom of Holland, the successor of the Batavian Republic and the Republic of the United Provinces.

It is somewhat remarkable that all the great changes in the political condition of this people are intimately associated with

the mighty names of European history. Julius Cæsar, Clovis, Charlemagne, Charles the Fifth, and Napoleon, are the masters of policy and war, who appear on the scene at each successive crisis in the affairs of the Netherlands. We shall briefly recapitulate the leading events in the early history of these countries, from the date of their invasion by the Romans, down to the time when the various pioneers acquired their separate and independent princes, under the immediate posterity of Charlemagne.

Rome gained its first knowledge of the nations inhabiting the shores of the North Sea about a century before the birth of our Saviour, when a great host of those fierce barbarians broke in upon the Gauls, drove the Republican eagles before them, and defeated general after general, until the military genius of Caius Marius and the disciplined forces of the Republic, gathered under his standard, routed and utterly destroyed this terrible colony of the North, in a desperate conflict at Aquæ Sextiæ, the modern Aix. We possess, of course, but scanty and conjectural knowledge of the causes, which precipitated the Cimbri and Teutoni upon the people of the South; — whether, as Florus affirms, the ocean inundated their native lands, and drove them elsewhere for a habitation, or whether, as Plutarch intimates, they were tempted, by report of the wealth of Italy, to follow the example of some anterior emigration of their neighbours, the Celts. Certain it is, that this dark cloud of Northmen, which so long lowered in threatening masses over Gaul and Italy, being thoroughly dispelled by the skill of Marius and the fortune of Romans, little remained to the Cimbri in after times, says Tacitus, but the glory of their past greatness, which wellnigh balanced the power of Rome.*

The Cimbri dwelt, it is known, in what is now denominated Holstein and Jutland, along the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic. Modern authors suppose that their line of march into Gaul lay through the Netherlands, and the displacement of the existing population, which their irruption occasioned, made way for the changes in that country, which speedily took place, and which gave to it the political conformation which obtained there when it was invaded by Julius Cæsar. Previous to that period the Batavi, a tribe of the Catti, the most

* Florus, lib. iii. cap. 3. Paterculus, lib. ii. cap. 12. Plutarch, Marius. Tacitus de Mor. Germ. cap. 37.

warlike of the nations of Germany, had transferred their residence to the insular space comprehended between the Rhine and the Waal, and therefore called the island of the Batavi.* This martial colony, consisting of Germans exclusively, speedily communicated its own character to the surrounding tribes, swallowing up the Caninefates and other native races. Between the Batavi and the Gauls were seated the Menapii, occupying the country of modern Antwerp and Flanders; beyond the Batavi were the Frisons, these tribes being entitled to remembrance in common with the more prominent Batavi; and in these three nations we find the basis or germ of the Dutch and Flemish Netherlands.†

The Belgians, at that period, were comprehended within the limits of Gaul, divided by Cæsar into three parts, one of which, he says, the Belgæ occupy, as far as the Marne and the Seine; another the Aquitani, extending from the Seine to the Garonne; while the residue belongs to the Celtæ. Of all these, the Belgæ were deemed the least civilized and the most warlike, being the only people who had turned aside the torrent of the Teutones and Cimbri; and the subjugation of them, after an obstinate struggle, was the least of the great achievements of Cæsar in Gaul. Having reduced them to obedience, he marched his legions against the Menapii, who retired into their fastnesses, and left their invaders nothing wherewith to contend but wasted marshes and wintry skies; so that the baffled Romans were obliged to retreat and leave the barbarians in possession of their independence.‡ Thus it happened that the Batavi remained unassailed by him, and yet thus much within the reach of his influence, that, in respect of them, he obtained by negotiation what he might have found it difficult to accomplish by force of arms. Dazzled by the splendor of his reputation, they offered to him the benefit of their alliance; and, like the Belgæ, whom they resembled in their taste for war, entered into his army as auxiliaries, and served him faithfully and bravely in all his subsequent campaigns, whether against the Gauls or his countrymen of Rome. Thenceforth, of course, the Netherlands belonged to the Empire.

* Tacitus de Mor. cap. 29–31. Cæsar de Bello Gallico, lib. iv. cap. 7.

† Cæsar de Bello Gallico, lib. iv. cap. 4.

‡ Ibid., lib. i. cap. 1; lib. ii. passim; lib. iii. cap. 29.

The Batavians being drafted into the household troops of the early emperors of the family of Cæsar, performed the same service which the Swiss have so frequently assumed in our times, of aiding to maintain the authority of a ruler adversely to the interests of his subjects ; and thus they dealt back upon Rome the fit recompense of her ambition. Augustus made their island the head-quarters of his troops, in the expedition which he directed against the Germans, under the immediate command of his son-in-law Claudius Drusus, the younger brother of Tiberius. This adopted child of the Cæsars, whose preëminent abilities shed lustre on his exalted rank, pursued a career of uninterrupted victory among the tribes of Germany, vanquishing one confederacy after another, until his name grew to be synonymous with awe and terror, and descended to our times, in their language, as representing the incarnation of evil. Nor did he confine himself to military operations. He seems to have commenced that great system of laborious constructions, in the form of military roads, dykes, and canals, which, while they protected the Netherlands from the sea, rendered the latter subservient to the uses of internal commerce and of civilization. His premature death, at the age of thirty, interrupted the course of his brilliant acts, while the surname of Germanicus, made illustrious by the talents and misfortunes of his son, and all the magnificence of funeral pomp which imperial power could command, attested the grief and admiration of Augustus and of Rome.* The emperor transferred a large number of the vanquished Germans from the banks of the Elbe to the waste lands between the Rhine and the Maes ; divided the country into three provinces, called Belgic Gaul, and Upper and Lower Germany ; and gave to its various tribes the organization, laws, and refinement which belonged to the rest of the Empire. But the successes of Drusus, signal as they were, had produced but little permanent effect beyond the Rhine. Of this the Germans gave terrible proof by the attack of Arminius, or Hermann, on the camp of Quinctilius Varus, and the slaughter of three Roman legions ; an event which occasioned inconceivable consternation at Rome, so much so, that Augustus wore his beard and hair disordered for months, in sign of his grief,

* Florus, lib. iv. cap. 12. Paterc. lib. ii. cap. 97. Tacitus, Annal. lib. iii. cap. 5.

exclaiming, continually, “Quintilius Varus, restore my legions!” and made vows to Jupiter Maximus for the preservation of the public weal, in the form adopted during the wars of the Cimbri and the Marsi.* This event caused the borders of the Rhine to become once more the scene of hostilities, and diminished somewhat the confidence of the Emperor in the Batavian cohorts; but their transient feeling of distrust in the Belgians and Batavians passed away, and the victories of Germanicus, the son of Claudius Drusus, avenged the defeat and effaced the shame of the Romans.† Here it was that Caligula, the son of Germanicus, spent a part of his youth in the familiarity of camps, from which he acquired his surname; and here it was that he degraded the imperial purple, the army, and Rome herself, by the spectacle of a mock battle with the waves of the ocean.‡ During the reign of Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, the Belgic and Batavian provinces continued to follow the fortune of Rome, as indeed they well might, for the Batavian cohorts were foremost in the various political changes of the times, and exerted quite as much influence as the Romans themselves in the elevation of each successive emperor. The Frisons were sometimes in arms, and the Menapii appear to have yielded imperfect obedience; but the rest of the country gradually became thoroughly Roman, and received from its different governors institutions of education and public works of internal improvement, which compensated the people, in some degree, for the loss of independence.

Vespasian, however, arrived at the purple under circumstances materially different from his predecessors. Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, were not merely adopted children of the Julian family, commended to the Gauls and Belgians by all the authority of the name of Cæsar, but they were also a son, a brother, and a grandson of Germanicus. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, strangers alike to the blood of Cæsar and of Drusus, were made and unmade, as we have seen, by the immediate agency of the Belgians and Batavians; and their active participation in so many contests for power, and that among individuals having neither personal nor hereditary claims to its possession,

* Sueton. Octavius, cap. 23; Florus, lib. iv. cap. 12.

† Tacitus, Annal. lib. i. ii. passim; Sueton. Tiberius; Patercul. lib. ii. cap. 117.

‡ Sueton. Caligula; Tacitus, Germ. cap. 37.

could not fail to weaken their sense of dependence upon, and subjection to, the dominion of Rome. When, therefore, intelligence reached the northern limits of the Empire, that Vespasian had been saluted emperor by a handful of soldiers in the heart of Palestine, it found the Batavians ready to receive impulsion from any popular leader, possessed of sufficient daring, decision, and private inducement to assume the control of events. These conditions were combined in the person of Claudius Civilis, a Batavian of regal extraction, who, having incurred the suspicion of the government, had been imprisoned, in the time of Nero, and, although released by Galba, retained strong feelings of resentment against the Romans. Affecting to be another Hannibal or Sertorius, both of whom he resembled, in being blind of one eye, he incited the Batavians to take up arms, pretending to do so in behalf of Vespasian, in order the better to conceal his ultimate purposes. Assembling the boldest and noblest of his countrymen in a sacred grove, under pretence of a banquet, when they had become heated by excess and festivity, protracted into the night, calling to mind their ancient glory, and their present servitude, he exhorted them to throw off their ignoble fetters, and to show themselves worthy of their free forefathers, by manfully asserting their independence of Rome.

The effect of his address, upon the excited minds of his hearers, was electrical ; and they solemnly bound themselves by the barbarous rites and adjurations of their country. The Frisons, and the Caninefates, under the leading of a chief called Brinnus, made common cause with Civilis and the Batavians ; and the insurrection spread through the Netherlands, and the neighbouring regions of Gaul and Germany, like a flame. The Roman stations were taken by assault, their leaders plundered, their legions defeated and destroyed, and their provinces given up to devastation and bloodshed. Stimulated by the incantations of the prophetess Velleda, and hailed by the Germans and Gauls as the restorers of their independence, — *libertatis auctores*, — the Batavians needed only the hearty co-operation of the Gauls and Belgians, to lay the foundation of a new empire in the West. But, for this consummation, the time, it would seem, was not now ripe ; the resources of Rome remained as yet, ample, and the strength of her empire unbroken. Civilis was at length checked in his career by the vigorous operations of the Roman forces commanded by Pæ-

tilius Cerialis, and compelled to sue for peace ; the confederates being discouraged by reiterated defeats, and glad, upon honorable terms, to replace themselves under the ægis of the empire.* After this period, the Batavians cease to possess any distinct history, until the appearance of the Franks on the scene began to change the face of Europe.

The elder Pliny has left us a striking picture of the physical condition of the country and its inhabitants at this period. "There," says he, "the ocean pours in its flood twice every day, and produces a perpetual uncertainty whether the country may be considered as a part of the continent or of the sea. The wretched inhabitants take refuge on the sand hills, or in little huts, which they construct on the summits of lofty stakes, whose elevation is conformable to that of the highest tides. When the sea rises, they appear like navigators ; when it retires, they seem as though they had been shipwrecked. They subsist on the fish left by the reflux waters, and which they catch in nets formed of rushes or sea-weed. Neither tree nor shrub is visible on these shores. The drink of the people is rain-water, which they preserve with great care ; their fuel a sort of turf, which they gather and form with the hand. And yet these unfortunate beings dare to complain against their fate, when they fall under the power, and are incorporated with the empire of Rome."† In this picture of wretchedness it is easy to discern the present features of Holland, Zeeland, and Flanders, allowing for the vast improvements in the face of things which modern art and persevering industry have introduced. But, miserable as was the condition of the maritime population in the days of Pliny, it became even worse for a time, in the confusion attendant on the dissolution of the Roman Empire.

It was in the region of the Rhine and the Maes, that the Franks first began to play a prominent part in history (A. D. 250.) Pouring like a torrent upon Batavia, Belgium, and Gaul, although defeated by Probus, and afterwards by Julian, they succeeded in establishing themselves so effectually in the Isle of the Batavians, that the name of the latter speedily disappeared from Europe. But the Menapians and Frisons appear to have allied themselves with the new-comers, both retaining their independence, and the latter attaching their name to an extensive section of the country. Nay, Carausius, a Mena-

* Tacitus, *Histor. lib. iv. v. passim.*† Plin. *Hist. Nat. lib. xvi.*

pian, sustained by the Franks, was proclaimed emperor in Britain, and possessed paramount authority in that island, in the Netherlands, and on the intervening seas, in despite of the Emperor Diocletian. Presently we find the Saxons also by the side of the Franks, and commencing, at the mouth of the Rhine, a kind of perpetual war, transmitted to their descendants in France and England; for it seems to have been from this point that the Salian Franks, impelled by the Saxons, marched upon Gaul, while the Saxons embarked for the conquest of Britain. Two centuries of bloodshed and confusion elapsed after the first appearance of the Franks, ere any thing like fixed order emerged from the chaos of contending nations. At length, Clovis, the grandson of Meroveus, completed the overthrow of the Roman power in Gaul, embraced Christianity, and established the Merovingian dynasty of the Franks in the region of the Rhine, the Scheldt, and the Seine, (A. D. 486.) Of this race, the early princes appear to have been worthy of their station; but their successors, the *rois fainéans*, abandoned the cares of empire to the *maires du palais*, who, supreme alike at home and abroad, in war as in peace, were kings in all but name, and ere long added the dignity of royalty to the possession of its substance. Pepin d'Héristal, Charles Martel, and Pepin-le-Bref, having followed one after the other in hereditary succession as virtual rulers of the Franks, although by title only *maires du palais*, Pepin-le-Bref ventured finally to depose Hildéric, the last of the descendants of Clovis, and transmitted a legitimate crown to his son, the powerful and imperial Charlemagne, master of the mighty Western Empire, stretching from the Elbe to the Ebro, and embracing Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Italy, within its vast limits. (A. D. 768.)*

It is melancholy to reflect upon the condition of the people of Western Europe, and especially of the inhabitants of the Netherlands, during the five hundred years which intervened between the invasion of the Franks and the final consolidation of their power under Charlemagne. "Let us look back," says De Reiffenberg, "upon that disastrous period. A country covered with marshes or impenetrable forests, and which the ocean continually threatens to devour, like another Atlantis, is thinly inhabited by wretched beings painfully contending

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français.

with the elements for the earth they occupy. Romans and barbarians, pagans and Christians, Batavians, Gauls, Saxons, and Franks, mixed up in perpetual conflict, present a picture of moral and political confusion from which the mind turns with shrinking disgust. Nor is there any thing to relieve the horrors of the scene, except the noble ministration of so many self-devoted and fearless missionaries, who planted the seeds of religion and knowledge in the rough soil around them, and laid the foundation of modern civilization."

The Western Empire crumbled into fragments under the successors of Charlemagne. Louis le Débonnaire, his only surviving son, inherited the whole of his dominions ; but a sanguinary contest for the possession of them arose among the sons of Louis, even in his lifetime ; a contest which ended in the permanent subdivision of the empire. Lothaire, the eldest, with the title of emperor, obtained the territory which derived from him the name of Lotharingia or Lorraine, comprehending Burgundy and the chief part of the Netherlands ; while France proper fell to Charles the Bald, and the Germanic provinces beyond the Rhine, to Louis. Taking advantage of the distraction and weakness of the empire, the Normans now began to make frequent descents upon the maritime regions of Western Europe, wasting every thing before them, and committing those horrible excesses which caused to be inserted in the litany a new prayer for "deliverance from the rage of the Normans." It was in these troubled times that the feudal system, in all its incidents of lord and vassal, acquired its full developement. Under Charlemagne all the great dignities of the empire were personal merely ; but the civil wars among his descendants, and the depredations of the Normans, in diminishing the authority of the chief of the state, threw more of it into the hands of the temporary depositaries of power. In the reign of Charles the Bald, the counts assumed to themselves final jurisdiction in judicial affairs within their respective governments ; and it was permitted to every man to choose, between the king and his great vassals, whomsoever he should think meet for his feudal lord, — obedience to such immediate superior becoming the paramount political duty of society. It needed only that the public dignities of the great vassals should be rendered hereditary instead of personal, in order to give complete organization to the feudal system ; and this also the counts were able to accomplish. Meanwhile, it

became the custom of the times to found wealthy religious establishments, and to endow them with lands and vassals ; and in several instances powerful principalities were erected in favor of particular prelates of the church, invested with all the qualities of temporal sovereignty, except that of hereditary succession. And thus a new complexion was given to the whole face of Europe. The people becoming the liegemen or subjects of the barons, counts, or dukes, bound to follow them in peace and war, but absolved from direct dependence upon the kings or emperors, all effective power was vested in the persons of the great vassals of the crown ; who, by continual encroachment on the royal attributes, by successive usurpations, and by skilfully availing themselves of the force of circumstances, came to be each supreme within the limits of his feudal jurisdiction. Out of this condition of things arose the power of the Counts of Holland and Zeeland, the Bishops of Utrecht and Liege, the Marquess of Antwerp, the Dukes of Brabant, and all the host of petty princes, who appear on the stage at the beginning of the modern history of the Netherlands.*

ART. VIII. — *Society in America*, by HARRIET MARTINEAU, Author of "Illustrations of Political Economy." In 2 volumes. 12mo. New York. Saunders & Otley.

ON one point, unfortunately, Miss Martineau could have been at no loss, from the moment of deciding to write a book of Travels in this country. America her theme, satire was to "be her song ;" the bookseller and his patrons are to be satisfied with no less than a pungent piquancy of remark, and this they stand ready to compensate with no stinted bounty. To an Englishman with the advantage of some notoriety at home to start with, and some shrewdness in the selection of materials which any journey in a foreign country will supply, a tour in America is a pretty fortune. Thus the nests of the respectable line of the Fearons, Fidlers, Halls, Hamiltons, and Trollopes, are understood to have been comfortably feath-

* Guisot, *Civiliz. de France*, tom. ii.